

# Grafton House Preparatory School

1 Warrington Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Tameside OL6 6XB

## Inspection dates

12–14 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Relationships at all levels are excellent. This is a caring community where pupils learn and develop well.
- The headteacher and proprietors have ensured that the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes have continued to improve since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is mostly good, leading to good achievement for pupils.
- Pupils feel safe at school. Arrangements for their safeguarding and welfare are implemented rigorously.
- Good working relationships between the headteacher and proprietors ensure that the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Plans for improvement are monitored and implemented effectively.
- The wide range of subjects enriches learning and contributes well to the effective provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teaching and learning in the early years is good. Children make good progress from their starting points and they are ready for the next stage in their learning when they enter Year 1.
- Links with parents and carers are a strength.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Systems for managing teachers' performance are not sufficiently thorough.
- Feedback to pupils about their work does not always provide clear guidance about what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils are given too few opportunities to improve their writing skills in subjects other than English.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that:
  - feedback, including marking, always helps pupils to know how they can improve their work
  - pupils have more opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
  
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - rigorous systems are in place to manage the performance of teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders have ensured that all of the independent school standards and the statutory requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met.
- The vision and aims of the school are fully reflected in school life. The headteacher, well supported by the proprietors, helps to set a positive culture where the ambition is to provide the very best opportunities for all pupils. There is an expectation that all pupils will work hard and succeed academically and pastorally at Grafton. This inspection confirms the school's success in delivering these aspirations. Pupils' achievement is good and excellent relationships are evident at all levels. Parents and pupils confirm that the school is successful in delivering its promise.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain and strongly promotes fundamental British values. For example, the general and local elections are used successfully to provide pupils with insights into the democratic process. Pupils are given numerous opportunities to reflect on their actions, show compassion, care for others, and respect the beliefs of others. For example, they raise funds for local national charities, taking personal responsibility for organising events.
- School leaders have an accurate, honest view about how well the school is performing and what needs to be improved. The school improvement plan has identified the right priorities to drive further improvement and offers a clear picture of how they will be achieved.
- Parents and staff are highly appreciative of the work of the school. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online parental survey, Parent View, would recommend this school to others and agree that it keeps their children safe. Pupils are very happy and say that people are very caring. The older pupils are good at guiding and supporting the younger children.
- All policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. They have been suitably updated to reflect the government's latest guidance. Staff receive child protection training annually and recent updates included the required information on protecting pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Checks on the suitability of staff to work with children are carried out rigorously.
- While teaching is good overall and improving, the headteacher is not complacent. He recognises that not enough is outstanding and there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. He observes lessons, provides feedback to teachers and plans professional development sessions where weaknesses are identified. This has resulted in improvements in areas such as teachers' questioning skills and their ability to plan lessons for classes that cover a wide age range. However, current systems to manage the performance of teachers lack sufficient rigour and regularity to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The curriculum offered by the school promotes a love of learning. It is imaginative and is continually adapted to meet pupils' individual needs, preferences and interests. Based on the revised National Curriculum, the learning opportunities provided take full advantage of the local environment and provide good opportunities for outdoor learning and investigative work. The curriculum effectively promotes pupils' skills in English and mathematics as well as their personal development. There is good coverage of other subjects such as science, religious education and the humanities.
- Regular assessments of pupils' progress are undertaken to check that pupils are on track to meet their targets and pick up any potential underachievement early. The accuracy of these assessments is regularly monitored and moderated to ensure that judgements made about attainment and progress are accurate, although not all staff adhere to the school's marking policy.
- The school is too small to have an extended leadership structure with individual subject specialists. However, employment of specialist teachers for subjects such as physical education and music brings additional expertise to the school. They are used effectively and ensure pupils make good gains in their learning in these subjects.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance is good and provides the headteacher with challenge and support in the right proportions.
  - Expertly led by one of the proprietors, who spends a significant part of each week in school, governors have a strong commitment to providing the very best for the pupils and for the wider community. They recognise the challenges of growing the school while retaining the small 'family feel' that parents and pupils value.
  - Governors have a good understanding of the school's assessment systems and they are working with the headteacher to improve systems to manage teachers' performance.

- Governors, alongside the headteacher, ensure that all statutory duties and independent school regulations are met, including those for keeping pupils safe.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** **is good**

- Good teaching enables pupils to learn rapidly and make good progress. Teachers know their pupils well and plan the work according to their individual needs. High expectations of what pupils can achieve are a feature of the school's work.
- Reading, writing and mathematics are taught effectively throughout the school. As a result, pupils make good gains in their learning and attainment levels are high. Relationships in all classes are excellent, so pupils enjoy their learning and are happy to try out unfamiliar work.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is good. Success in acquiring reading skills and the school's emphasis on this area explains why pupils' reading and phonics results continue to improve. This was well illustrated in a lesson on phonics; almost all pupils were able to achieve their learning objective. Tasks were set at the right level and the teacher's questioning regularly checked on pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoyed testing out new sounds and unfamiliar words on their classmates and adults. They were delighted with their ability to put their 'new words' into sentences and to spot similarities and differences in the spelling and pronunciation of words that initially seemed the same, such as 'towel' and owl'.
- The teaching of reading is given high priority in all parts of the school. Teaching is effective and ensures pupils' reading skills develop well. Pupils' love of reading is supported and encouraged. Pupils talk about how they enjoy 'snuggling up with a good book' and the organisation of classrooms allows this to happen. Teachers in all classes regularly listen to pupils read and this is another contributory factor to the high standards that pupils reach in their reading.
- Pupils' good behaviour is a feature of all classes. Occasional extra 'chatter' is often associated with pupils' excitement at completing their work and does not negatively affect the learning of others.
- Teaching is not outstanding because older pupils are given too few planned opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English. Pupils' writing skills and results are relatively weaker compared to those found in reading or mathematics.
- Pupils with special education needs and disability receive good support and, as a result, they make similar rates of progress to their classmates.
- The school has effective systems to check and improve pupils' progress. This is linked to regular tests and scrutiny of pupils' work. In many parts of the school, the feedback to pupils, including marking, is exemplary and fully meets the expectations of the school's marking policy. On a few occasions, this is not the case, with pupils unclear as to what they should do next to improve.
- Homework is regularly set and includes both consolidation of work completed in class as well as individual projects for pupils to complete. It makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** **is good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and of their own achievements. They are confident, assured and have consistently positive attitudes to learning. There is a culture within the school of 'wanting to do well and succeeding', but not at the expense of others.
- Parents and staff agree that pupils are safe and are well looked after. Pupils understand the different types of bullying, including homophobic remarks and cyber bullying. They are sure that, if it happened, it would be dealt with promptly by adults. They say there is no bullying but that if pupils disagree, 'most of the time we sort it out ourselves and everyone goes away happy'. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when they use the internet.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and arrive punctually. Attendance levels continue to improve and are broadly average. The school's work to improve attendance is paying dividends, with a marked reduction in the levels of persistent absence.

- In a small school with new pupils joining at other than the usual times, the welcome extended to visitors and newly arrived pupils is a strength. It means that newcomers settle quickly into school routines.
- Leaders have ensured that all of the required policies and procedures related to the safety and welfare of pupils are updated, meet the requirements of the independent school standards and are rigorously implemented. For example, thorough risk assessments are completed daily to ensure that play equipment is safe for pupils to use.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- This good behaviour is confirmed by parents, staff and the pupils themselves. They treat one another with respect and courtesy, often helping younger pupils with their learning. Pupils' relationships with staff are excellent and there are high expectations of good behaviour in all classrooms.
- The school's policy for behaviour is clearly set out with a good range of rewards and some sanctions clearly explained. 'We rarely need those because hardly anyone misbehaves', was how one pupil explained the school's sanctions. There have no exclusions from the school for many years.
- Leaders have ensured that a full range of policies and procedures are in place. The independent school standards for this aspect of the school's work are met.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

**are good**

- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, by the end of both Key Stages 1 and 2, is generally above the national average. Results in 2015 were especially high. Records of pupils' progress, observations of teaching and scrutiny of pupils' books confirms that pupils currently in school are making good progress from their starting points. There are so few pupils in each year group that any analysis of trends over time is unhelpful.
- Pupils read well. Effective daily teaching of phonics has resulted in improvements in pupils' reading skills. This has also brought about a steady improvement in the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check. Pupils who do not meet the expected phonics standard in Year 1 catch up very quickly in Year 2.
- Pupils' writing skills are developing well; however, they could be even better if more writing opportunities were provided in subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils have secure mathematical skills and are able to use information effectively to solve number problems.
- The school's focus is on pupils' individual progress against their targets and making sure that tasks are set at the right level. Progress is consistently good across the school, not just in English and mathematics, but also across the full curriculum that is offered. Where subjects are taught by subject specialists such as in physical education and music, pupils' progress is also good.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disability make good progress because their needs are identified early and they are provided with tailor-made support.
- The most-able pupils flourish in small classes and benefit from a curriculum that is carefully matched to their individual needs. This helps to explain why they reach such high standards.
- The school ensures that all pupils are treated equally and that social skills are developed. Pupils listen attentively to teachers and other staff and are successfully prepared for the next stage of their education.

### **Early years provision**

**is good**

- Leadership and management of early years are good. Leaders ensure that all early years requirements and independent school standards are met. Children are happy and stay safe in well-organised classrooms. Staff are experienced, well trained and use assessment information well to plan what children will be learning.
- Children start Nursery with skills that are typical for their age, especially in their speech, language, social and emotional development. They make good progress in all areas of learning and are well prepared for Year 1. Most attain their early learning goals due to the good teaching that they receive. Adults provide well-directed support and encourage children's independence from the day they join the school.
- Exciting and interesting learning activities are planned by the adults. They are well matched to children's specific needs. For example, the role play area was set out as an airline check-in desk and children took

their roles seriously. They made their own boarding passes and were made to wait in line by the 'engineer' until he was sure the plane could be repaired. The children really enjoyed the work. Activities like this provide good opportunities for children to practise their mark-making, speech and negotiation skills.

- Adults have very quickly established learning, social and communication routines across the early years provision, enabling children to be confident, and their personal skills are developing well
- Children's personal development and behaviour are good because of the high expectations set for them. Adults ensure that children know how to be safe and who to talk to if they need help or have a concern. Whether they are learning indoors or outdoors, children behave in ways that keep them safe. This was illustrated by a group of Reception and Nursery children planning and building a track for their toy cars outside. Working as a team without adult intervention, they discussed how the track should be arranged, made sure it was secure and took turns to 'test drive' the cars safely.
- Parents receive regular feedback about their child's progress and are very positive about the quality of education provided. 'My child has flourished since arriving at Grafton, I cannot thank the teachers enough', is typical of the comments made by parents in their discussions with the inspector.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130399
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008522
<b>DfE registration number</b>	357/6001
<b>Type of school</b>	Preparatory school
<b>School status</b>	Independent
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	20
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	21
<b>Proprietor</b>	Ashton Preparatory School Limited
<b>Chair</b>	Elaine Sagar
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Robert Wynn
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£4,500
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 343 3015
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info@grafthouse.co.uk">info@grafthouse.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	11 March 2010

## Information about this school

- Grafton House Preparatory School is a non-selective, independent day school for boys and girls situated in Ashton-under-Lyne in Greater Manchester. The school provides full-time education for up to 104 children aged three to 11 years. There are currently 41 pupils on roll, including 21 part-time pupils.
- The school opened in 1991 and the current proprietors purchased the school from the previous owner in June 2008.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2009.
- There is also daycare provision for 62 children aged three months to three years, before- and after-school provision and care during school holidays for up to 62 children. The evaluation of this provision did not form part of this inspection.
- The school aims to 'provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and able to achieve personal excellence in all aspects of life'.
- The last school inspection was in March 2010.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- The inspector observed nine lessons in a range of subjects. One of these was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a director of the school (who is one of the proprietors), and other members of staff.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website, key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding and child protection. He scrutinised pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- The views from four staff questionnaires were considered.
- There were 10 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View). The inspector spoke with some parents and carers before school.

## Inspection team

Mike Hewlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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